

country when it comes to their health care. That is what it is about.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman.

Governor Steve Beshear of Kentucky spoke to us this morning. Now, Kentucky is not the center of Democratic politics in America, as MITCH MCCONNELL would quickly observe. Thousands of people are signing up in Kentucky—thousands of people—successfully. Thousands of people are coming forward. About 70,000 people have already signed up in Kentucky. Thousands of people are coming forward in New York and California, all over this country, who are saying I want the assurance and coverage of health care.

What have they spent their time on? Trying to repeal health care. They have talked about repeal and replace. We haven't had much replace, but we have had a lot of repeal. And what does the majority leader refer to, Mr. Speaker? A 2009 bill. It is a bill from three Congresses ago that he is talking about, and all we have had on this is repeal. If they are concerned about health care, then there ought to be an alternative that the other side offers; but, frankly, Mr. Speaker, they have not done that.

I would be glad to move to another subject. I am sure we can go back to health care because the majority leader, notwithstanding his assertion that this is not about politics, I will tell him that the majority of the American people in poll after poll after poll says they don't want health care repeal. They want it fixed, and they want it to work right and the assurance that it is available to them, but they do not want it repealed.

Right now, even though they are upset, as we all are, as I am and as the President is, about the rollout and about the Web site not working as effectively as we would like, Americans right now, I will tell the majority leader, the majority in polls say they don't want it repealed. They want it fixed and they want to have it work. Very frankly, I think that is where they are. Not everybody. Not everybody, I understand that, and certainly not some factions of the Republican majority's party. They have made that very clear in statements on this floor. But my view is that we ought not to simply distract from some of the important things that need to be done.

I was interested in Senator CORNYN's response when he talked about the Iran deal, which 65 percent of the American public says was a worthwhile effort to make. We need to carefully review it, and we need to oversee it and make sure it works, and the majority leader and I have to work on that. But when Senator CORNYN said this was just a ruse—and I don't think he used the word "ruse," but just an effort to distract from health care, I think that sort of indicates the extraordinary focus that this issue has energized the Republican Party, Mr. Speaker, over the last 3 or 4 years.

Can I ask the majority leader about the budget conference, whether he has

any idea—he has talked about, on the schedule, the budget conference coming forward. Does he have any idea whether a budget conference agreement has been reached, number one; and number two, if an agreement is reached, will it manifest itself in the form of a budget conference report?

I am informed, maybe correctly or incorrectly, that there will never be a budget conference report. Does the gentleman know whether that is the case or not, and whether or not some agreement might be manifested by a bill and not by a conference report?

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman that the discussions that I have had with Chairman RYAN would lead me to some optimism that the two sides actually can come to an agreement. The agreement has not been made, so I don't want to say that there is a deal; but I am optimistic that, in fact, this time of year when the differences between the two sides have certainly been on display all year long, that perhaps we could agree that we need to reduce the deficit. We need to do something about the wasteful spending. And once again, I don't think the gentleman, nor I, thinks that the sequester is the best method to cut spending. It is indiscriminate. It cuts bad programs the same way as good programs, to put it simply. There are better ways.

Our side has always said, Mr. Speaker, that we have got to do something about the mandatory programs, the autopilot spending of the Federal Government that is disproportionately causing our deficit. I am hopeful that next week we can show the people of this country that we can produce something that is smarter than the way we are going about things now.

Obviously, a big concern to me is the national security and the defense of this country, as I know it is for the gentleman. And so again, I am hopeful that will be the case.

Now, the form that that agreement may or may not take I think right now is undetermined. I think it would be premature to even guess at that, and I would say to the gentleman that I know that he joins me in hoping that there is an agreement where we can maintain the trajectory in reducing spending and do it in a smarter way so we can get about the business of prioritizing the expenditure of taxpayer dollars here in this House.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for his comments. I will say that he and I, as he has articulated, do agree that the sequester is not good policy. As a matter of fact, Chairman HAL ROGERS, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, said it best when he said that the sequester cuts are ill-conceived and unrealistic and that he believes that the House action has indicated that that is the case. We have not done appropriation bills consistent with the sequester levels that as I understand were agreed at Williamsburg to be offered, but they haven't worked.

My own view, Mr. Speaker, of what is being discussed in the budget conference, some of the things that I have heard, strike me as being unbalanced, unfair, irresponsible, and unacceptable. Unless we have a balanced agreement, which in my view should replace the sequester because, as the majority leader indicates, it is not the rational way to go, as Mr. ROGERS indicates, it is not the rational way to go, and as every chairman of the appropriations subcommittees on the Republican side have said, it is not the way to go and ought to be replaced.

□ 1345

I am hopeful that any agreement will, in fact, replace the sequester. I am hopeful, Mr. Majority Leader, as you well know, that we will get a big deal—not a little deal, not nibbling around the edges so that what occurs is we do this every 6 months and we never get to a stability that I know the majority leader and I believe would give confidence to our economy, to the business community, and to our people if we got a big deal. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be, at least at this point in time, in the discussion. I think that is unfortunate.

As I said, what I have heard so far seems to me to be unbalanced, unfair, irresponsible, and, from my perspective, unacceptable. So I am hopeful that the Budget Committee conference will revisit or at least come up with a product that is not yet being discussed, which will accomplish the objective of putting this country on a fiscally sustainable path for the long term, not just the short term.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2013

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet on Monday next, when it shall convene at noon for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SALMON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

WATER FOR THE WORLD: TURN ON THE FAUCET

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when you and I are thirsty, we walk 3 feet to the nearest faucet or grab a bottle of water out of the fridge; but that isn't so for thousands of people living around the world.

Each morning in Africa, women and young girls, like this girl in Tanzania, wake up and walk for miles just to collect water for their family. The walk can be dangerous because some wells